

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lauren Carbone, 775.786.0558

## ***John Randall Nelson + Bryan Christiansen at Stremmel Gallery***

Dates: September 8 – October 8, 2011

Reception for the Artists: Thursday, September 8, 5:30-7:30pm

Stremmel Gallery is pleased to announce *John Randall Nelson + Bryan Christiansen*, recent painting and sculpture. The exhibition opens with a reception for the artists on Thursday, September 8 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm and will remain on view until October 8, 2011.

**John Randall Nelson** emerged in the mid-'90s as a painter and sculptor known for taking simple, bold, instantly recognizable images of everyday symbols and imbuing them with a sense of theatre. Embracing the concept of artist as storyteller, Nelson is a chronicler of contemporary culture, his symbolic amalgamations forming an intuitive sense of the besieged, "over communicated, how-to" society in which we live. His paintings often consist of a central image superimposed over a collage of symbols and text (anything from art criticism to nursery rhymes). Daily life is represented through select bits and pieces carefully plucked, placed, layered, painted, sanded and repainted. Nelson's persistent, almost obsessive editing and rearrangement of these pieces allow viewers to uncover the grammar of his private language. Through the constant reworking of the surface and the rearranging of form, the process of discovery and creation comes to the forefront of Nelson's canvases. His paintings are narrative in two ways: They encourage viewers to invent their own stories based on the images and messages used, but they also present the "story" of their own creation, inviting the experience of a restless and somewhat anxious journey of the art-making process.

**Bryan Christiansen** creates life-sized contemporary sculpture that challenges conventional notions of rural life, home, the rituals of the hunting tradition, and the innocence of childhood. Discarded household furniture found in neglected urban areas becomes assemblage that stands in for the trophies, antler mounts, and pelts often prized by hunters. Christiansen's work recalls the gritty, discarded object sculpture of 1950s assemblage artists Bruce Conner and Ed Kienholz. However, unlike these artists interested in probing the passage of time, death, and decay, Christiansen reconstructs exquisitely crafted works that feature exposed hand-stitchery and floral fabrics. This process of assembling has more to do with making sense of life than decoding death. Christiansen's sculptures take the form of trophies, physical triumphs of the present over the past and the strength to confront some of life's most challenging contradictions. Raised in a small log cabin in the Black Hills of South Dakota, his childhood was influenced by activities associated with rustic, agrarian living: Absorbing nature, communing with wildlife, and learning to hunt. These activities, alongside the turbulent and complex development of his family's domestic life, are what led Christiansen to art as a way of wrestling with the conflicting realities of his past.

To set up a private tour of the gallery and works by John Randall Nelson and Bryan Christiansen, please contact Stremmel Gallery at 786-0558 or visit [www.stremmelgallery.com](http://www.stremmelgallery.com). Stremmel Gallery is located at 1400 S. Virginia Street, Reno, NV. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm, and Saturday from 10 am to 3 pm.

###